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# Smithfield Monthly Meeting (Society of Friends) Records

1711-2009 49 vols., 7 boxes (6.5 linear feet) Call no.: MS 902 S658

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Read collection overview

Founded in 1705, the Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends is the oldest surviving institution in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and has been an important center for Quakerism in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for more than three centuries. Established as the Providence Monthly Meeting, the meeting changed name to Smithfield in 1731, and subsequently gave rise to both Uxbridge and Providence Monthly Meetings. A pastoral meeting since the late nineteenth century, Smithfield currently offers one unprogrammed meeting for worship monthly.

The records of the Smithfield Monthly Meeting document three centuries of an active meeting within the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. Beginning 1718, the collection includes comprehensive minutes for both men's and women's meetings (when separate); notices of births, deaths, marriages, separations, removals, and arrivals; accounts of the meeting's Bible School held in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; records of the Ladies' Aid and Women's Foreign Missionary Auxiliary; and in more recent years, an extensive run of newsletters.

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<u>Quakers</u> <u>Religion</u> <u>Rhode Island</u>

# **Background on Smithfield Monthly Meeting**

Abbie Loring in Cape Cod Quaker attire, ca.1930.

#### Photo by Alton H. Blackington

Founded in 1705, the Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends is the oldest continuouslyoperating institution in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and is historically one of the most important meetings in the northern part of the state. The varied names and locations of the meeting can, at first, be a challenge to sort out. The meeting originated in Saylesville, R.I., in 1705 as the Providence Preparative Meeting under care of Greenwich Monthly. Set off as the Providence Monthly Meeting in 1718, its first meetinghouse was erected in present-day Woonsocket a year later, with the current building replacing it after a fire in 1881. The meeting changed name to Smithfield in 1731 after the town of that of that name was incorporated out of Providence. Finally, in 1781, Smithfield Monthly was divided into four parts: Smithfield Monthly (at "Upper Smithfield"), Uxbridge Monthly (in Massachusetts), Providence Monthly, and Lower Smithfield Constituent Meeting (also known as Saylesville Meeting, now under care of the new Providence Monthly Meeting).

Over the years, Smithfield was a center of social activism. During the antebellum period, it was a hotbed of abolitionist sentiment, admitting enslaved and freed people into membership, and disowning one particularly prominent member -- Stephen Hopkins, Governor of Rhode Island and signer of the Declaration of Independence -- for refusing to manumit the people he enslaved. The meetinghouse, parsonage, and cemetery are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Smithfield has been a pastoral meeting since before the turn of the twentieth century, although it currently hosts one unprogrammed meeting for worship monthly. It was a member of Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting (1718-1801), Smithfield Quarterly (1801-1971), Rhode-Island-Smithfield (1971-?), and Southeast Quarter. It has overseen numerous worship groups and preparative meetings in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

Smithfield Monthly Meeting: Constituent meetings

- Blackstone (Mass.) Preparative Meeting (1845-1882)
- Worship group (1882-1883, 1892)
- Burrillville Preparative Meeting (1806-1893)
- Burrillville Worship group (1893-before 1901)
- Douglas (Mass.) Worship group (?-1783)
- Elisabeth Aldrich's House Worship group (1773-ca.1776)
- Foxboro (Mass.) Worship group (1804-1809): became Mansfield Worship group
- Glocester Worship group (1791-1793)
- Preparative Meeting (1793-1806): became Burrillville Preparative Meeting
- Leicester (Mass.) Worship group (ca.1739-1783)
- Mansfield (Mass.) Worship group (1809-1819
- Mansfield (Mass.) Preparative Meeting (1819-1898)
- Mendon (Mass.) Worship group (1718-1818): became Mendon North Worship group
- Mendon (Mass.) Preparative Meeting (1815-1845): became Blackstone Preparative Meeting
- Mendon North (Mass.) Worship group (1818-1841)
- Mendon South (Mass.) Worship group (1818-1845)
- Northbridge Worship group (ca.1765-1783)
- Providence Worship group (1725-1783): known as Stamper's Hill Worship group (1725-1745)
- Richmond (N.H.) Worship group (1766-1775, 1776-1783)
- Richmond (N.H.) Preparative Meeting (1775-1776)
- Saylesville Preparative Meeting (1718-1783)
- Known as: Providence Preparative Meeting (1718-1731)
- Smithfield Preparative Meeting (1731-1773)
- Lower Smithfield Preparative Meeting (1773-1783)
- Scituate Worship group (ca.1736-1783)
- Thomas Steer's House Worship group (1773-ca.1776)
- Thompson (Conn.) Worship group (1821-1822)

# Scope of collection

The records of the Smithfield Monthly Meeting document three centuries of an active meeting within the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. Beginning 1718, the collection includes comprehensive minutes for both men's and women's meetings (when separate); notices of births, deaths, marriages, separations, removals, and arrivals; accounts of the meeting's Bible School held in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; records of the Ladies' Aid and Women's Foreign Missionary Auxiliary; and in more recent years, an extensive run of newsletters.

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### Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

#### Provenance

Part of the <u>New England Yearly Meeting of Friends Records</u>, October 2018.

#### **Related Material**

Two volumes of records from Smithfield Monthly Meeting are part of the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society:

- Irish Famine Relief Committee records, 1847 (1 folder)
- Smithfield Preparatory Meeting Minutes, 1773-1777 (1 vol.)

#### **Processing Information**

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#### Contributors

• Smithfield Monthly Meeting (Society of Friends) [main entry]

#### **Genres and formats**

- Minutes (Administrative records)
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